announced by the State Government, and to recommend necessary measures for addressing the issue of rural distress. The Team has given various recommendation such as provisions for distribution of appropriate seeds, advisory and extension services, waiver of institutional credit, disciplining unlicensed money lenders, streamlining institutional credit flow, water harvesting and conservation, regional development plans, procurement and pricing, value addition of cotton, empowerment of farmer growers, setting up contributory fund and self help groups, and crop insurance.

The Prime Minister alongwith Agriculture Minister visited the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra during 30th June to 1st July, 2006 and announced a detailed package of assistance to the affected districts which, *inter alia*, contains provision for *ex-gratia* assistance from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, debt relief to farmers, enhanced credit flow, interest waiver, assured irrigation facilities, seed replacement and cropping intensity, watershed development, horticulture development, micro irrigation, extension services, and subsidiary income opportunities. Actions are underway for implementation of the package. The PMO as well as Ministry of Agriculture is regularly reviewing the progress of implementation to ensure that the benefit of the announced package reaches the needy farmers fully and expeditiously.

At the instance of the PMO, a Planning Commission team alongwith officials of the Government of Kerala visited Wayanad district of the State from 7th to 11th June, 2006, to study the problems pertaining to agricultural distress in the district and suggest remedial measures. The team submitted its report to the Planning Commission which is being examined.

Suicides in Bundelkhand

2267. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE. Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of small and marginal farmers in the backward area of Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh are committing suicides but no steps have been taken yet to help the farmers;

(b) whether there is any proposal to declare any package for Bundelkhand like that of Vidarbha; and

(c) if not, the other steps being planned to help the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The necessary information is being obtained and shall be laid on the Table of the House.

(b) At present there is no such proposal under consideration of the Government.

(c) Government is implementing a number of schemes for development of the agriculture sector and improving the condition of farmers. The strategies formulated, *inter alia*, include (i) enhancing institutional credit flow to the farmers and strengthening of cooperative credit structure; (ii) ensuring the timely availability of quality inputs: (iii) promoting farmer friendly, demand driven agriculture extension system; (iv) accelerating diversification to high value crops including horticulture activities; (v) strengthening infrastructure and the supply chain; (vi) optimizing the efficient utilization of available water resources through micro irrigation and enhancing the sustainability of dry-land/rain fed farming system; (vii) reforming agricultural markets, and widespread use of post harvest technology; and (viii) putting in place a broader spectrum of risk management apparatus for farmers. The focus of agriculture credit policy is on progressive institutionalization for providing timely and adequate credit support to farmers with particular focus on small and marginal farmers to enable them to adopt modern technology and improved agricultural practices for increasing agricultural production and productivity.

Supply of fertilizers and pesticides to small/marginal farmers

2268. SHRI T. T. V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that insufficient application of fertilizers and pesticides by farmers result in low yield, affecting agricultural output;

(b) the estimated loss of production on account of this; and

(c) the steps taken to provide adequate fertilizers and pesticides to farmers particularly to small/marginal farmers to increase production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE